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REQUEST FOR INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL ITEM IN THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE FIFTIETH SESSION

"WHITE HELMETS" INITIATIVE, PARTICIPATION OF VOLUNTEERS IN ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE FIELD OF HUMANITARIAN RELIEF, REHABILITATION AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

Letter dated 29 June 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On behalf of the Government of the Argentine Republic and in accordance with rule 13 (e) of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I have the honour to request the inclusion, in the context of consideration of the item relating to the "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance", of a sub-item entitled "'White Helmets' initiative, participation of volunteers in activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development" in the provisional agenda of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

In accordance with rule 20 of the rules of procedure, I attach an explanatory memorandum in connection with my Government's request.

(Signed) Emilio J. CÁRDENAS
Permanent Representative

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Annex

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

In October 1993 the President of the Argentine Republic launched a global initiative for the creation of national volunteer groups, called "White Helmets", whose objective would be to make men and women of good will available to the United Nations, with the aim of strengthening the reserve capacity of developing countries in support of United Nations activities in the field of emergency humanitarian assistance and the gradual transition from relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development.

This initiative, which was supported by a number of heads of State and was favourably considered by several agencies, led Argentina, together with 65 other countries, to submit to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session a draft resolution intended to establish the institutional framework for the United Nations, through its system of volunteers and under its coordination, to provide a vehicle for the initiative. This process culminated in the adoption by consensus of General Assembly resolution 49/139 B in December 1994.

In turn, since the adoption of resolution 41/139 B and its subsequent reaffirmation in the Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, Argentina, in coordination with other countries, has been working to arrange trials for the use of White Helmets in places and zones affected by emergency situations. In this regard it is anticipated that White Helmets will soon be deployed in Haiti, in support of United Nations activities in the field.

Resolution 49/139 B, in addition to setting out terms of reference for the use and creation of suitable arrangements for their recruitment, training and deployment, established a process of political follow-up which led to the submission of a report to the appropriate segment of the Economic and Social Council in 1995. This report, prepared on the basis of replies received from a number of Governments, United Nations system agencies, non-governmental organizations and international bodies, synthesizes and presents arrangements for the use of these volunteers for consideration by Member States.

- Resolution 49/139 B also requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session on the implementation of the present resolution, in the context of debate on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.

In accordance with the foregoing, and bearing in mind from a formal and substantive viewpoint the content of the report submitted to the Economic and Social Council and that which the Secretary-General is to submit to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session on the implementation of resolution 49/139 B, we are of the view that discussion of the item requires it to be dealt with separately from the overall subject of humanitarian assistance, for which reason the Argentine Government is proposing the inclusion of a sub-item under the item "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance",

entitled "'White Helmets' initiative, participation of volunteers in activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development", so that the States Members of the United Nations may have an opportunity to continue the work begun at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.